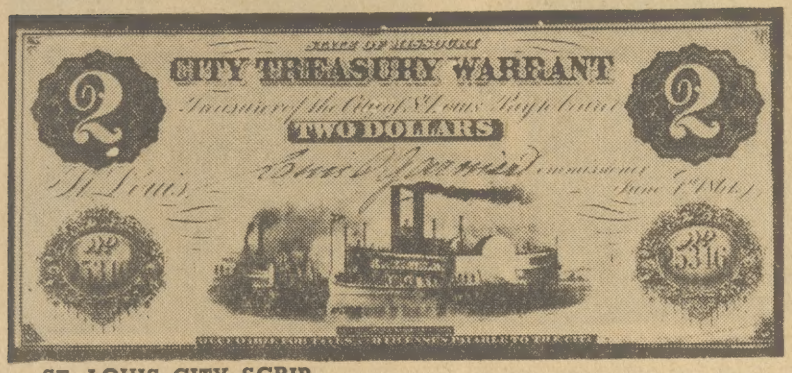
Money Tells U.S. History

Currency Reflects Struggles and Developments



ST. LOUIS CITY SCRIP was issued back in 1861 when the municipality was having financial troubles. It was decorated with an engraving of a river scene. Issuance of the scrip was authorized by Missouri Legislature.

By RAY NOONAN
Globe-Democrat Staff Writer

Money is history. In American coins and currency are reflected many of the catchwords, the political struggle and social developments of this country.

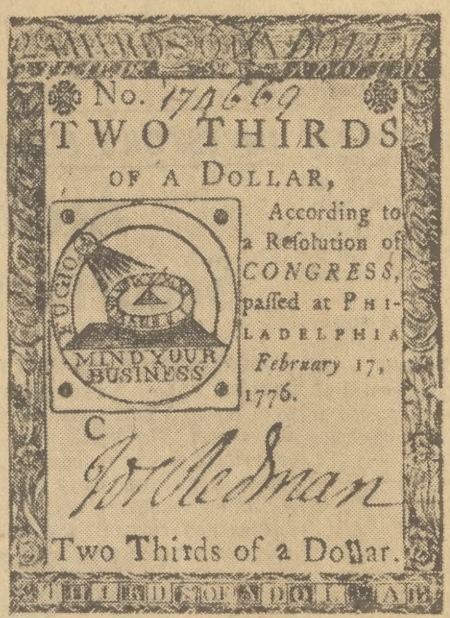
For example, a large section of our nation — "Dixie"—derived its nickname from a particular type of currency. The term "O. K.," now an established part of the American language, was first given general circulation on a political coin.

An old descriptive standby — "not worth a continental"—stems from this nation's early currency.

Even the amount of religious feeling in our land can be gauged to some degree by inscriptions on coins and currency. Resurgences of religion after periods of war and in the era of nuclear weapons are evidenced in this manner.

"Sooner or later, nearly everything in history shows up on money," Eric P. Newman, a nationally recognized researchist in American monetary history, commented.

Mr. Newman, an attorney and secretary of Edison Brothers Stores, Inc., here, has written a number of articles


No. 17669
TWO THIRDS
OF A DOLLAR,
According to a Resolution of CONGRESS, passed at PHILADELPHIA February 17, 1776.
MIND YOUR BUSINESS
Two Thirds of a Dollar.

TWO-THIRDS OF A DOLLAR was the peculiar denomination of one of the American pieces of currency issued during the Revolutionary War.

ERIC P. NEWMAN, a St. Louis shoe company executive, has earned a national reputation for his research in monetary history.

LYONS DEN

Wm. Holden Changes His Tune

By LEONARD LYONS

William Holden held a press conference in his Tokyo hotel suite last week. He told the reporters how delightful the Japanese girls are, especially compared to the arrogant American females. At that moment his wife, Brenda Marshall, entered the room, "OK, fellows," Holden continued, "like I was just saying — there are exceptions to every rule."

The Tokyo press corps just moved into a new Foreign Correspondents Club. James Michener took an active part in this move and was given the title, "Moving Czar." Michener was in Okinawa on opening day. His wife, Mari, phoned him from the club and said: "It's a grand opening." And everyone's talking about you." The Moving Czar was pleased. "Yes, we're all sitting on the floor," his wife added, "because someone forgot to move the furniture from the old place."

Wm. Holden

★ ★ ★

Brigitte Bardot's producer, Raoul Levy, signed a deal with Columbia Pitcures for a movie co-starring Miss Bardot and Frank Sinatra. It will be written by Harry Kurnitz. On the bulletin board at Columbia's offices the anouncement of the new project was put up. Under "Stars" was written "F. S. and B. B." In the next column, under "Title," was written, "With F. S. and B. B. in the cast, who cares about the title?"

★ ★ ★

Philip K. Wrigley, owner of the Chicago Cubs, finally has been interviewed. Wrigley is so shy that he's never been on radio or TV, and is the only owner of a pennant-winning team ever to go through a World Series unphotographed. . . . He said to Sports Illustrated: "I don't think I've ever done anything I've ever wanted to do or ever will."

★ ★ ★

Real Success Story

John Armbruster Cashed His "Break"

By TED SCHAFERS
Globe-Democrat Staff Writer

Two things attract the eye of a visitor to the offices of John H. Armbruster, Overland real estate dealer and president of the Community Savings and Loan Association.

One is the youthful appearance of this 62-year-old man and his infectious booming laugh. The other is a 50-year-old typewriter of unusual design.

Many friends kid him that the old machine is a memento of the days when he "was poor." This he smilingly denies, pointing out the typewriter still works, so why throw it away.

This St. Louis County leader, who has left his mark around the world, got his first "break" about 30 years ago when his employer, a real estate dealer, was offered a chance to buy a large tract of desirable land. However, the dealer was so wrapped up in an impending European trip he offered one-half to Mr. Armbruster if he would take on the responsibility of subdividing and selling the tract in lots of one acre each.

"My only possible loss was about $75 a month in interest if I didn't make any sales. I was earning about $300 a month then and had a family. So I visited the banker who had offered my boss the deal and told him I wanted to back out," said Mr. Armbruster.

"He spent two hours talking up my courage and I've always been grateful. . . . I try to do the same for others today," Mr. Ambruster added.

"To make money, you must think big and take a chance," the banker told him, recalling at the same time that a number of people in the area had wanted to buy an acre or two of this 60-acre tract, but the owners had not wanted to sell off any parts.

First Success

"All I could remember," laughed Mr. Ambruster, as he told the story the other day,

MONEY FROM ALL OVER THE WORLD pours into the offices of John H. Armbruster, president of the Community Federal Savings and Loan Association of Overland, Mo. Of $104,000,000 in deposits, he says about 50 per cent represents savings of persons living outside of Missouri and 5 per cent in foreign countries. —Staff Photo by Ed Meier

and a group of 15 responsible citizens to oversee the loans.

Fantastic Growth

This was 1933 and money was hard to get, but Mr. Armbruster made the rounds collecting deposits and promises for future deposits. One of the biggest investors was a director, and now president of the St. John's Community Bank . . . Walter H. Branneky.

Bankers are supposed to be mortal enemies of savings and loan associations, but Mr. Branneky has never regretted helping to start the Community Federal Savings and Loan Association of Overland.

From an initial capitalization of $5023 the company in the last 25 years has grown so that today it has assets in excess of $104,000,000.

This is more money than most St. Louis banks can boast.

Mr. Armbruster has used every media to sell the merits of his company, including newspapers, radio, television and direct mail.

He is St. Louis' most prolific letter writer. Hundreds of letters go out weekly reminding homeowners, banks, trust companies, insurance firms, here and overseas that his company offers a high dividend rate and deposit insurance up to $10,000.

He gets money from all of them!

This reporter watched him open a batch of mail the other day. There were checks from $25 to $10,000—including those from a trust company in Boston, several unions and a half-dozen Americans working abroad.

More than $5,000,000 has been sent from overseas investors. How do they hear about this Overland firm? They get letters from Mr.

and publications based on his research.

He started as a youthful coin collector, but he found that delving into the historical background of money was more interesting than just accumulating old coins and currency. He now gathers information from public and private collections in Europe as well as in America.

Issued in 1616

From the first coinage for America — copper coins issued in 1616 by the Virginia Company—down to the present, money offers a fascinating field for historical research.

Economic warfare through the use of counterfeit currency first came into being in the American Revolutionary War, Mr. Newman found in his research. The British counterfeited Continental currency and put it into circulation in this country in an effort to undermine the economic stability of this nation's government.

The plan, undertaken with the help of American Tories, was so bold that advertisements were placed in newspapers in British-occupied New York on Apr. 14, 1777, offering to give away the counterfeit money to those who would use it.

Since then the use of currency as an instrument of war has become universally recognized.

During the American Revolution, the Continental Congress issued reams of paper money to finance the war. By 1780 the value of this money had depreciated to an exchange rate of 40 to 1 for hard money and then became worthless.

Switched to Dollar

From this development originated the phrase, 'not worth a continental.'

One of the odd units of currency authorized by Congress on Feb. 17, 1776, was one designated as "Two Thirds of a Dollar."

It was during the Revolution that our country started on a course which resulted in our present monetary denominations of dollars and decimal parts instead of following the British system of pounds, shillings and pence.

In the early colonial days, the various colonies issued paper money in pound, shilling and pence denominations. But the value of a "pound" differed from colony to colony and there was no uniformity of exchange between the individual colonies or between them and the mother country.

A transition period came during the American Revolution when some colonies issued currency in values expressed both in Spanish dollars and English denominations.

When the first Continental Congress currency was issued it was imprinted to show that it was redeemable in "Spanish milled dollars," this being the principal hard money in circulation in this country at the time.

From that evolved our dollar system. Thomas Jefferson advocated a decimal system of coinage resulting in a one-tenth, known as a disme or dime, and a one-hundredth part, known as a cent.

Half-Dimes in 1792

As early as 1792 there were half-dimes, the first ones being produced from family silver turned over to the mint by George Washington for that purpose. Not until much later did "nickels" come into being, in 1866, when the use of nickel as a metal for coinage had proven practical.

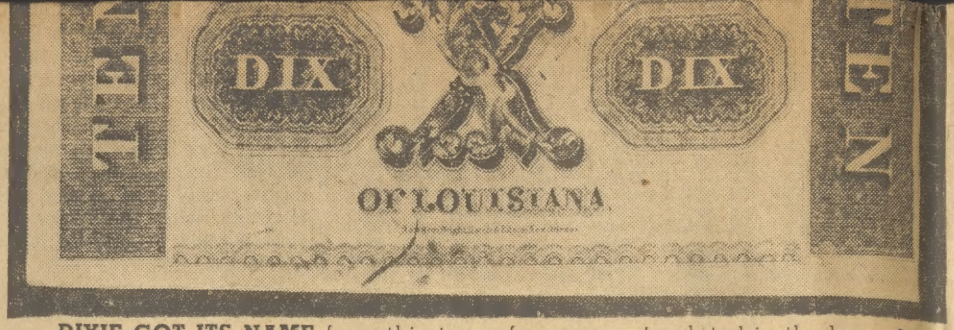
Prior to the Civil War, the money of this nation included a great variety of privately-minted coins, scrip, and bank notes issued by a multiplicity of banks, businesses and individuals. Foreign money circulated freely.

It was open season for counterfeiters because of the many kinds of currency in circulation. Banks and mercantile establishments kept thick catalogs giving minute descriptions of the various currencies as an aid to detecting counterfeits. Lucky was the man who knew whether or not he had a phony bill.

One of the curious possessions of Mr. Newman is the 1806 memorandum book of a cautious New England country merchant. In this book the merchant jotted down a precise description of every piece of currency he received in business, including the serial number, and the name of the person from whom he received it.

Early View of City

This way the merchant knew from whom to seek restitution in case a piece of currency turned out to be worthless. Likewise he kept a detailed record showing to whom he paid each piece of currency.



DIXIE GOT ITS NAME from this type of currency circulated in the lower Mississippi Valley prior to the Civil War. Here are shown front (above) and back views of this $10 bank note, which carried the French word "dix", meaning 10.

While studying pictures on early bank notes, Mr. Newman discovered the oldest known view of St. Louis. This view, engraved on a note of the Bank of St. Louis in 1817, shows the market house after which Market street was named and the original Laclede-Chouteau home.

Since the discovery of this picture by Mr. Newman, it is now reproduced on page 11 of the Greater St. Louis telephone directories.

To fill the needs of commerce and because of an insufficient quantity of government-minted small coins, many private firms produced pennies and scrip which were freely used in trade.

Some privately-minted coins were used for political propaganda purposes.

A 1-cent piece distributed by supporters of Martin Van Buren, who was President in 1837-41 and unsuccessfully sought a second term, bore a picture of Van Buren and the legend:

"The sober second thoughts of the people are O.K."

Origin of 'O. K.'

This is believed to have been the first general circulation of the term "O. K." The initials derived from the fact that Van Buren, a resident of Kinderhook, N. Y., was sometimes referred to as "Old Kinderhook" and the approval of "O. K." was needed in Democratic party affairs.

Another political coin, issued in 1837, bore the inscription, "Bentonian mint drop." This coin was issued by advocates of the "hard money" policy urged by Missouri's United States Senator Thomas Hart Benton.

Around 1850, bilingual bank notes, printed in both English and French, were issued in Louisiana and circulated throughout the lower Mississippi Valley.

The $10 bill had printed on it the French word for 10: dix. These bills became known as "dixies" and the area in which they were circulated as the "land of dixies" or "Dixieland." The words "Dixie" and "Dixieland" were picked up in a minstrel song which was revised into the famous Confederate war song, "Dixie."

And that's how Dixie was born from a $10 bill.

An Old Problem

A reminder that municipal financial problems are not new in St. Louis is a piece of city-issued scrip of 1861. An example is a $2 City Treasury Warrant, representative of scrip produced for the city during a period of money troubles at the outset of the Civil War.

In one instance, the picture of a foreign monarch has appeared on a United States coin. This was a commemorative 25-cent piece minted in connection with the World's Columbian Exposition, held in Chicago in 1893. The coin carried the picture of Queen Isabella of Spain, the sponsor of Christopher Columbus.

Mr. Newman has noted that our money reflects the rise of religious feeling in troubled times.

"In God We Trust" appeared on a United States coin for the first time when it was put on the 1864 2-cent piece during the Civil War.

Not until last year, in the era of threatened doom by nuclear explosion, did this nation get around to printing "In God We Trust" on its paper currency.

At the time of Mr. Roberts' death in 1957, Mr. Newman was helping him on some monetary historical phases of a novel Mr. Roberts was writing. Their correspondence started about a decade before, when Mr. Newman pointed out some errors in monetary references in one of Mr. Roberts' earlier novels, "Oliver Wiswell."

In his most recent research, which he is now preparing for publication, Mr. Newman believes he has solved a long-time mystery in monetary circles. On the first Continental dollar of 1776 are the engraver's initials, E. G. After much original research, Mr. Newman believes he has now identified E. G. for the records for the first time as Elisha Gallaudet.

Tony Randall, star of "Oh Captain!" will spend his summer vacation making a movie for the new company he just incorporated. . . . Barnaby Conrad will conduct an 18-day bullfighting tour of Spain in May. Each of his guests will have a chance to fight a bull. . . Howard Hughes, who recently became the largest individual stockholder in 20th-Century-Fox may sell his entire holdings to the corporation.

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Illustrious alumni of the American Academy of Dramatic Arts attended the graduation ceremonies the other day. Garson Kanin told the graduates: I just realized that I was graduated from this school before you were born." . . . Howard Lindsay then spoke up: "And I just realized that I was graduated from this school before you and Garson Kanin were born.

★ ★ ★

Some airport personnel at Idlewild now carry Polaroid cameras to furnish two quick photos of any passenger who might require them at immigration in the countries to which they're flying. . . . The Hotel Negresco in Nice, for years a favorite of the Riviera tourists, has become a co-operative apartment house. . . . The long titles for Broadway plays inspired Laurence Olivier to say: "I thought up a little title for a comedy. It's 'I Wish I Could Think of a Shorter Title.'"

★ ★ ★

Helena Rubinstein has a prized art collection. She began collecting art years ago with the help of Sir Jacob Epstein, the sculptor. She'd attend the auction sales at his behest and he'd tell her what he was willing to pay. "If I got it at that price, I bought it for Epstein," she said. "If it went higher, I bought it for myself."

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Elliott Paul, author of "Life and Death of a Spanish Town" and "The Last Time I Saw Paris," died last Monday in Providence, R. I. Paul spent most of his life abroad. In Hollywood he confessed that he was homesick for the second time in his life—the first was when he attended the University of Maine.

One night I saw him at Cafe Society Uptown where, for the first time, he heard boogie-woogie being played. He vowed that in two weeks he'd play this new beat. He bought a piano by telephone, listening to the salesman demonstrate chords over the phone and choosing the one that sounded best. Two weeks later he gave a party at Luchow's where he played a half hour of boogie-woogie.

been interested.' So I flooded the area with notices that the tract would be up for sale in one-acre lots the following Sunday and would be sold on a first-come first-serve basis.

"The entire tract was bought up in two weeks. By the time the lots were paid out, three to five years later, I pocketed one-half of a $40,000 profit.

"That left me unafraid the rest of my life to tackle tough jobs," he added.

During the depression, when his boss "fired" him for refusing to buy him out, Mr. Armbruster organized his own company, which today has more than 20 employes and is one of the leading firms in St. Louis County.

About that time another thing happened that was to bring him a national, in fact, international reputation.

He read in a St. Louis newspaper one day a story from Washington urging businessmen to investigate the possibilities of starting a savings and loan association under the auspices of the Hown Owners Loan Corporation.

"I was curious and wrote to Washington asking for information on what had to be done to get such an association started."

"They said all that was needed was $5000 in capital

What is even more remarkable is that, despite its out-of the-way location at 8914 St. Charles Rock road, deposits pour in daily from every state in the country and some 20 foreign nations as well.

More than 90 per cent of all savings deposits come by United States Mail, said Mr. Armbruster.

This money, except for necessary reserves, has been invested in mortgages which financed the building of 28,000 homes within a 50-mile radius of St. Louis—mostly in St. Louis County.

Mr. Branneky, who serves as board chairman of the association, credits the firm with being responsible for the growth of the Overland area.

"First came the homes . . . then stores and now industry has followed. Our bank has shared in this boom," he said.

Another banker on the association's board is Harry C. Mummert, vice president, of St. John's Bank.

Same Directors

Normally differences arise among any 15 men during the course of 25 years, but none of the original directors has parted company except as the result of death. This is a tribute to Mr. Armbruster's qualities of leadership, said Mr. Branneky.

Of course, it takes more than a hearty laugh to lure $100,000,000 in savings into a company.

Armbruster or hear about it from friends.

Despite the current recession, for example, since January the association's savings deposits climbed $7,000,000.

Outside his company activities Mr. Armbruster is a prolific letter writer in his own right.

Although it has been 27 years since he became inelgible as a member of the 'Junior' Chamber of Commerce, he has kept contact with all the officers through a mythical group called the "S. S. Fellowship." He keeps about 500 of them informed monthly with a chatty letter and, once a year attends a formal meeting.

Friends a Hobby

He does the same thing with a group of former International C. of C. members who are assigned around the world.

"If there is one hobby I have . . . it is making and keeping friends," he said. "Sometimes it's rough but I always try to write a nice letter once a month.

His real estate firm, which has offices adjoining the loan association, he said, is run by "my capable executive vice president, Walter F. Faerber." Mr. Armbruster spends his time at the helm of Community Federal.

Recently associates surprised him with a new air-conditioned Cadillac—a reward for taking his firm over the $100,000,000 mark.

John H. Armbruster has been honored as past president of the St. Louis County Real Estate Board, St. Louis Chapter of the American Institute of Appraisers, Clayton Rotary Club, St. Louis Junior C. of C. and honorary life vice president of the United States Junior C. of C. He is a director of William Woods College and is active in many projects, including the present fund raising drive of the Metropolitan St. Louis YMCA.

His four daughters and five grandchildren are reminders of Father Time. His daughters accuse him of taking beauty treatments and search his home regularly for hair dyes.

"It bothers them to see their daddy so young looking and their own husbands getting gray," he laughed.

"Life hasn't always been peaches and cream for me either," he said, "but there's no sense in getting sour about it."

"Life is worth living. Thinking good about people makes it easier to live.

"Maybe that's why I haven't turned gray, he chuckled.

"Or, maybe it's because my wife and I have had the privilege of knowing a lot of wonderful people."

YOU can Help

Editor's Note:

Welfare Agencies are in constant need of man-and-woman power to help them better serve those requiring their aid.

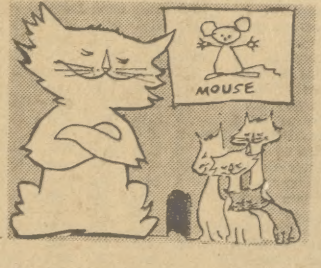
The Globe-Democrat each week will publish a call for volunteers, outlining the jobs that most urgently need filling at the moment.

If you can and will help, call the VOLUNTEER SERVICE BUREAU, GA. 1-2600.

GROUP WORKERS

A settlement house in the St. Louis area has an excellent recreational program for teenagers in their neighborhood but they need help from 7 p. m. until 10 p. m. in supervising the behavior and the materials used.

The evening program is divided into three areas of activity and volunteers would be welcome in each. First, outdoor activity is very popular and the youngsters play volley ball on lighted courts and roller skate in the only area that is available in the entire neighborhood. Second, their games and social dancing need to be supervised.Third, the younger boys have a romping time



tumbling, wrestling and boxing in the gymnasium.

Imagine the bustle of activity during just one evening at this settlement house and how much fun it would be to become a part of it and to feel that you were contributing to the pleasure of these young adults and to the future of the city.